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ABSTRACT

At the margins of American education are students with unusual needs who challenge teachers to the limits of their commitments, insights, and skills. This paper considers the marginalized students in inner-city schools and suggests ways to improve education for them and for all students. There are disproportionate numbers of racial and ethnic minority students at the margins. The following types of programs and students are typically described: (1) special education programs for learning disabled and mentally retarded students; (2) language-related programs for minority students and immigrants; (3) high achiever programs; and (4) students suspended or expelled from school. There are other categorical programs, and a look across all the types suggests that they are not working as well as intended, and that they pay too little attention to student outcomes. Categorical programs often have a limited curriculum and a single problem-minimizing instructional mode. They are also likely to be inadequately researched and evaluated. To reach numbers of marginalized students, the immediate task is to strengthen the schools of the inner city, mainly by focusing on effective instruction. Instructional improvement heads the list of solutions, followed by policy-level changes and revised bureaucracy. Improvement in the lives and learning of all inner-city children is the most urgent issue in the nation. An epilogue summarizes recommendations from the conference at which this paper was presented. Appendix A lists participants, and Appendix B contains the conference agenda. (Contains 1 figure, 1 table, and 38 references.) (SLD)

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Inner-City Students at the Margins

by M.C. Wang, M.C. Reynolds, & H.J. Walberg

With a summary of recommendations from the Invitational Conference on Making a Difference for Students At Risk, Princeton, New Jersey, 1993

The National Center on Education in the Inner Cities

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Inner-City Students at the Margins

Margaret C. Wang, Maynard C. Reynolds, and Herbert J. Walberg

National Center on Education in the Inner Cities

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INNER-CITY STUDENTS AT THE MARGINS

> The menace to America today is in the emphasis
> on what separates us rather than on
> what brings us together.
> *Daniel J. Boorstin*
> *(1993)*

The way to get a story together is not to head first and directly to the center of it, but to start somewhere at the edges or the margins. So says the journalist James Reston (1991) in his memoirs. That may be the way to understand schools, too. In this paper, as with the conference for which it was prepared, we look to the margins; that is, to students who have unusual needs and who challenge teachers to the far limits of their commitments, insights, and skills. In doing this, we express our concerns about students who are marginalized in the schools, but we also choose this course as a way of understanding all students and their schools, and of assessing what can be done to achieve schooling success for all the diverse students today, particularly those in the inner cities.

In the context of our discussion, we refer to a diverse set of students including those whose primary language is not English and others who, for whatever reason, are struggling in their academic programs or in their social behavior in the schools; they are at risk in their private lives and at the center of growing concern about community order and growth.[1] They require instruction which is adapted to their individual needs. We refer also to students who show potential for outstanding performance in valuable ways and to high-achieving students who, despite adverse life conditions in the inner city, are learning and adjusting to school life especially well. Such resilient students receive far too little help in most inner-city schools even though, just like other students, they need instruction that is adapted to their strengths.

Disturbingly, there are disproportionate numbers of racial and ethnic minority children at the margins. These disproportions extend to the arrangements made for their schooling, so much so that it seems doubtful that progress has been made since the War on Poverty of the 1960s or even since the Brown decision of 1954. African-American students, for example, are labeled retarded or behaviorally

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[1] The term "students at the margins" could, about as well, be "students at risk," "exceptional students," "disadvantaged and resilient students," "marginalized students," and/or "gifted and talented students." Each term lacks full clarity. Each has its critics. We use them all and somewhat interchangeably, trusting to the reader to understand and tolerate our roundabout approach to a construct with many names and nuances.

disturbed and set aside from regular classes at rates two or three times higher than white students. Similarly, African-American students are suspended or expelled from school much more frequently than other students. No analysis of schooling situations is complete if it does not attend to this calamitous situation for minority students (Heller, Holtzman, & Messick, 1982).

Although inner-city schools have many problems, the biggest crisis is at the margins. In this paper, our discussion is intended to be candid, critical, and forward looking, taking a look to the margins but with a commitment to try for improvements in the lives and learning of all children and youth in the inner cities.

Two basic assumptions undergird all that follows here. First, we understand and fully accept the obligation to offer education that is beneficial to every child. It is a great moral victory for our society that in wave after wave of legislative action, it has been declared that all children, even those who are most difficult to teach, have a right to education and that it should be appropriate for each individual. The universal right to education is now more than a rhetorical tradition--it is becoming a legal reality--but the struggle to make it meaningful continues, especially at the margins.

Second, we accept the moral imperative that the schools should be as fully integrated as possible. This means that separation, in whatever form, whether by race, gender, language background, abilities, or whatever, should be minimal and requires compelling rationale. The aim is for totally inclusive schools. The burden of proof lies with those who advocate separation of students from such schools.

Taking a Closer Look

So, let's go to the margins of the schools and look around at both students and programs. What do we see?

Special Education

We see special education in eight or nine varieties, with children labeled for the kind of special intervention they receive: learning disabled, mentally retarded, emotionally disturbed, blind, deaf, and so on. The state has awarded special certificates to "teachers of [categorical term]" following preparation in special programs in colleges for "teachers of . . .".

Special subsidies by state and federal offices amount to about $20 billion per year for special education. Adding other state and local funds, some urban school districts find a total of 25% of school expenditures going to special education. Rules and regulations put these programs largely out of local control. Some cities still maintain whole schools for special education programs and pay high costs to transport pupils to "categorically correct" stations.

Two of the largest categories of special education are for children who are learning disabled (LD) and for those who are mentally retarded (MR). The latter category is for students who score low on IQ tests and are thus neither predicted nor expected to learn well in school. We are already experiencing deep difficulties due to carrying low expectations for many such children.

The LD category is for students who are the surprises, those who have slightly higher Iqs and who are expected to do well but are not actually achieving in basic subjects such as reading. This is the middle-class category. Almost two decades ago, Featherstone (1975) predicted with remarkable vision that "[s]chools that carelessly mislabel poor children are very likely going to mislabel middle-class children as dyslexic or hyperkinetic" (p. 14). In the 1990s, we can read the last few words of this quotation as "learning disabled or Attention Deficit Disordered."

LD was a relatively new label in 1975, but it is now carried by more than half of the disabled students in the nation's categorical special education programs. Classification as LD depends on calculation of a discrepancy between the rate of learning that could be expected of a child and what the child actually demonstrates in matters such as reading. It is often necessary to wait through the primary grades for the discrepancy to grow to acceptable magnitude for classification and placement, breeding failure, helplessness, and worse in the interim. The lack of early efforts to serve students who show slow starts in school learning is inexcusable.

There is no separate knowledge base for teaching children classified as mildly MR and LD. Yet we have in so many places continued using psychologists only to give tests, calculate discrepancies, issue their expectations, and send children off to separate places with demeaning labels--all at high expense.

Distinctive instructional practices have been designed for special needs students who are blind or deaf, and much of what is offered by speech pathologists has distinctive credibility and utility. Emerging programs for severely and profoundly disabled students also have distinctive qualities and qualify for special arrangements. But for the remainder, there is often need for intensive and individualized education rather than a different kind of education. There is even less need for state and federal authorities to send in monitoring teams to ascertain that programs are separate, all labels in place, and all paperwork in order.

We believe we are justified in describing today's special education programs as contributors to the severe disjointedness of schools, as a bad case of "proceduralism" (in which norms for procedures have surpassed norms for true substance or credibility in operations), and as a cause of mutilation of the role of psychologists in the schools. The wildly accelerated development of the LD category is, or should be, an embarrassment to everyone involved. What is the excuse?

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 programs were started in the mid-1960s to assist disadvantaged children. At a cost of about 6 billion dollars per year, this program serves about 5 million students, operating mainly by pull-out procedures. It provides little incentive for administrators to "pay attention to conditions and activities falling outside it" (Orland, 1993, p. 11). This isolation exists despite evidence that students served in Chapter 1 programs completely overlap, in terms of characteristics, with students in LD programs (Jenkins, Pious, & Peterson, 1988).

The Chapter 1 program is increasingly criticized as a fragmented and uncoordinated program that adds to the disjointedness of schools, especially those with large numbers of poor students. A proper remedy will require a broad approach to curriculum, rather than narrowly focused skills training, and a renegotiated and more integral relationship with general education (Commission on Chapter 1, 1992).

The independent Commission on Chapter 1 is calling for a major change in the program, one that would remake entire schools that serve many poor children. We favor the Commission's ideas for change, but not its strategy, which neglects the involvement of other categorical programs. Chapter 1 is large among federal programs, but at the school level it is relatively small, and perhaps not in a position to lead a major transformation of the schools. Why not proceed in a broader fashion in concert with other categorical programs and general education (Wang, Reynolds, & Walberg, 1993)? We especially note the need to coordinate Chapter 1 programs with those for educable retarded and LD children. [See the conference paper by Pugach (1993) for a more extended discussion of special education and Chapter 1 programs.]

Language-Related Programs for Minority Students

In absolute numbers, the decade of the 1980s saw more immigrants (9 million) arrive in the United States than in any other decade of U.S. history.[2] More than 2 million immigrant children and youth entered the public schools of the nation in the 1980s, mainly in large cities such as Chicago, Los Angeles, Miami, and New York (McDonnell & Hill, 1993).

The evidence on outcomes of programs for immigrant children is limited and controversial. Some bilingual instruction which takes into account specific cultural differences and language differences appears to be successful (Moll & Diaz, 1987). Others believe that "bilingual education retards rather than expedites the movement of Hispanic children into the English-speaking world and that it promotes segregation more than it does integration" (Schlesinger, 1992, p. 108). The recent Rand report

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[2] As a percentage of total population, immigration was greater in 1900-10.

(McDonnell & Hill, 1993) makes a strong case for attending to the unique needs of newcomers to America's schools, but within the regular education framework. [See the conference paper by Garcia (1993) for extended treatment of this topic.]

High Achievers

A challenge of great significance concerns students in inner-city schools who somehow manage to achieve at high levels despite their adverse life situations. The rates of identification of inner-city students as high achievers or as gifted or talented are low. Expectations for their development tend to be low, and there are relatively few special streams of support for these students, compared with those who fall to the bottom in school achievement and behavior. Able learners are, perhaps, no less burdened by poor identification and labeling systems than low-achieving students. One constantly hears echoes of old debates about general abilities versus more specific abilities and which are primary in cognitive structures. But few ideas have been carried to fruition in the form of well-confirmed ideas and valid tools to proceed with the education of those who show they are highly educable. The advanced placement program and kindred procedures for accelerating the curriculum for able learners are helpful in secondary schools and in facilitating the transition to college. Numerous possibilities for advancing programs at earlier levels can be offered, but they require leadership, which is not always present except in the limited areas of athletics and, often, music. [See the conference paper by Renzulli (1993) for an extended treatment of this topic.]

A Large, Silent Category: School Demissions

A very large category, but one dealt with in relative silence, is comprised of students suspended and expelled from schools. We should quickly note the overlap in categories. As Frankel (1988) stated:

> After all, it's often the same kids . . . who've enrolled in less challenging classes or the 'soft areas' of special education; who don't come to school regularly and who--to no one's surprise--drag down the group averages on the standardized achievement test results. (p. 2)

Data are not plentiful on the subject of school demissions (excuses, exclusions, suspensions, and expulsions). There is no clear and powerful advocacy group for those demitted. They closely resemble those who attend school reluctantly and then drop out, but we have better data on these voluntary demissions. Perhaps there is some embarrassment about the data. The worry is that since there is little data one might conclude that there are few problems.

Data for the 1991-92 school year in the city of Minneapolis, where 54% of students were minority and 46% were white, revealed the primary causes for suspensions: (1) fighting; (2) lack of cooperation; (3) pushing, shoving, and scuffling; and (4) disrespect. The following additional data were also compiled:

- 20% of the students were suspended at least once, and, on average, 2.4 times;
- 69% of those suspended were male;
- 36% of African-American students were suspended at least once; and
- 30% of special education students were suspended at least once.

In the 1986-87 school year in New Orleans, African-American males accounted for 43% of the school population, but 58% of nonpromotions, 65% of suspensions, 80% of expulsions, and 45% of the dropouts. Nonpromotion is clearly a factor associated with dropouts, attendance problems, and suspensions (Garibaldi, 1992). Disruption is the frequent precipitating behavior for suspensions, and rates for such behavior increase as one moves up the grades. There are promising practices to reduce suspension rates (Wager, 1992-93).

Some General Observations about Categorical Programs

There are other categorical programs, but rather than describe each of them, we offer a few observations as we look across them all:

1. In the main, they are not working nearly as well as intended. Categorical programs tend to be organized around factors thought to be predispositional to poor school learning. Thus, for example, several programs serve children from economically poor families and migratory families or children described as MR or LD. (Many specialists see the LD label as proxy for underlying perceptual or neurological problems--often with little or no evidence). The classifications are remote from what teachers can perceive and influence. The schools have organized programs separately, in accordance with categories specified in legislative action, even if there is no evidence that programs organized in separate ways work. Governmental bureaucracies, special funding streams, and monitoring systems have tended to force separation and to rigidify highly categorized and disorderly school systems. Broad accord is emerging in the view that there have been too few benefits from narrowly framed categorical programs and that there is need to recreate them in broader fashion in unity with regular education. Schools should instead organize programs around more directly assessed instructional needs (Reynolds & Zetlin, 1992).

2. Most programs operate, and are funded, on the basis of input variables, with little attention to outcomes. That is, students are qualified for special programs on the basis of their characteristics at time of entry. Their school districts immediately qualify for special subsidies as students enter the special programs. For funding purposes, it does not seem to matter whether or not the programs do any good. Evaluations have been difficult, but few show positive results, and many show negative results. The programs generally do not work.

3. Categorical programs often settle for a limited curriculum and for a simple problem-minimizing instructional mode (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1989). Maintaining good order, simplifying and

reducing the curriculum, decreasing referrals to the principal's office, fixating on management, getting through the book, and teaching simple skills have sometimes seemed enough. But the world of today requires aggressive teaching for problem solving and complex thinking. Sadly, we think a problem-minimizing approach has also been observed among educational leaders. We note that at the time of this writing, a draft RFP (request for proposal) issued by the U.S. Department of Education for a research and development center focused on at-risk students is explicit in excluding disabled students from consideration. Similarly, a request being made by the U.S. Department of Education to the Congress for waiver authority apparently will exclude the entire field of special education. It is easier to set aside the categorical programs in these ways than to make inclusive arrangements in policies and procedures. No one needs the hornet's nest on their desk, so set it aside!

4. Many people are beginning to ask mainstream educators why so many students are set aside in categorical programs. Are there not ways to reform general education so that it will be more powerful in meeting the needs of all students, including those so often marginalized in today's schools?

5. Program administration and monitoring by federal authorities (and, to an extent, by state authorities) reflect a distrust that local educators will use the resources provided in service to the targets specified by legislators. The result has been a growing, heavy load of rules and regulations enforced by bureaucrats and a corresponding passive or hostile resistance by local educators. Lortie (1976) described teachers as feeling that they were left at the far tail end of a long chain of moral insight by policymakers and administrators inside the District of Columbia beltway. The assumption about superior moral insight in Washington is doubted and resented by teachers who work long hours with children and are then required to produce massive paperwork for review by distant monitors. The same regulations set an essentially judicial model for meetings of parents and teachers in planning school programs for individual children. Mutual trust is an essential condition for teaching, and it has been diminished. The federal role in education programs has been to separate what should be integrated and to create distrust where trust is most needed. Reform is required.

6. We lack sufficient research and data on pupils and programs at the margins of the schools. Testing data and the large national data bases often omit pupils in special programs (McGrew, Thurlow, & Spiegel, 1993), a practice which invites educators to inflate findings on average pupil achievements in their schools and districts. When there are no data, it is too easy to conclude that there are no problems or to leave them to vague approximations.

7. A serious estrangement has developed between universities and inner-city schools, resulting in a critical abandonment of such schools by the agency serving as prime custodian of research personnel.

Voices for Reform

A few years ago, when a number of educators launched what became known as the Regular Education Initiative (REI), a drive to unify categorical programs and regular education, a common criticism was that the only voices heard were those of specialists. Where, the critics asked, are the initiatives by regular educators? Now there is a virtual cascade of such initiatives by leaders in professional groups of regular educators and by some others as well.

Physicians and psychologists play key roles in some school programs, especially in the classification and diagnosis of students who exhibit special problems. Thus, it is important to note the important changes now occurring in these related professions and fields. In 1989, a change in Title V of the Social Security Act established a new mandate described as "the only current foundation of a national health policy for children with special health care needs" (Ireys & Nelson, 1992, p. 321). Children with special health care needs were defined as children "with disabilities and handicapping conditions, with chronic illness and conditions, with health-related educational or behavioral problems, and at risk for disabilities, chronic conditions, and health-related educational and behavioral problems" (p. 323). The definition is broad and it is explicit about the relationship between health and education. Furthermore, new policies suggest that "development of separate service systems for each diagnostic group is not feasible"; instead, "all children with special health care needs should be considered as part of a single class" (p. 323). States are now required to spend 30% of their maternal and child health monies on children with special needs and on improvement of "the service system for these children and their families by promoting family-centered, community-based, coordinated care" (p. 321). These provisions dramatically alter the public work of the health professions in the direction of less categorizing of children and programs, more work on prevention of problems, and more coordination with schools and other child-serving agencies.

The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), in association with the National Coalition of Advocates for Students (NCAS), recently issued a position statement on "appropriate educational services for all children" which, in part, proposed "the development and piloting of alternatives to the current categorical system" and advocated "policy and funding waivers needed for the piloting of alternative service delivery models" (NCAS & NASP, undated, p. 2).

Other Voices Among Educators

> "[F]or practical purposes, there is increasingly convergent belief that . . . subgroups of learning problems represent a continuum of cognitive and adaptive inefficiency and

ineffectiveness in classroom learning situations, rather than discretely different disabilities."

(Gerber, 1987, p. 171)

"Certain categories of students may have 'special educational needs,' but it is educationally dysfunctional to separate those students' curriculum, performance expectations, and remediation strategies from those of other students."

(Orland, 1993, p. 19)

"[F]or . . . those identified as having learning disabilities . . . there are no agreed upon conceptual or operational criteria for classification."

(Keogh, 1988, p. 229)

"Rapprochement between regular education and special education should be one of the major thrusts in special education in the next decade."

(Gallagher, 1983)

"The most fundamental change may be the need to cease the current classification system, which focuses on within-child categories, and to begin funding programs based on the need for resources."

(Epps & Tindal, 1987, p. 242)

"[P]articipation in support programs [e.g., Chapter 1 or special education resource rooms] often serves to replace core curriculum instruction. Students . . . actually ended up with less instructional time than students not served."

(Allington & Johnston, 1986, p. 11)

"The best way to help immigrant students is to strengthen the school systems that serve them, not to create new categorical programs that single out immigrants for special benefits. . . . Some way must be found for the federal government and states to move beyond their current emphasis on small categorical programs to help big cities improve their school systems across the board."

(McDonnell & Hill, 1993, p. xiii)

Voices of Major Educational Organizations

Council of Chief State School Officers: To ensure opportunity for all, states should be allowed to consolidate programs serving "poor and ethnic or minority-language children--under a single administrative plan, [to] integrate services and commingle funds.

> . . . [F]ederal special education funds and Chapter 1 money could be merged to serve students in both programs."
>
> (*Education Daily*, 11/17/92, pp. 1, 3)
>
> "The use of labels to determine a student's educational program is invalid."
>
> (*Concerns*, 3/92, p. 2)
>
> National Association of State Directors of Special Education: By the year 2000, "the needs of all children will be identified and met without reference to assigned labels or categories of severity of disability. . . . Schools will provide family-focused, one-stop support that includes multi-agency responsibility."
>
> (*Counterpoint*, Summer 1993, p. 2)
>
> The "Reinventing Chapter 1" report of the staff of the U.S. Department of Education finds that the current program-improvement provisions of Chapter 1 "have not been a significant instrument for fundamental changes. . . . The authors recommend a series of changes designed to move Chapter 1 from a focus on remedial help for individual children to an emphasis on schoolwide improvement."
>
> (*Education Week*, 2/2/93, pp. 2-3)
>
> National Association of State Boards of Education: "State boards should encourage and foster collaborative partnerships and joint training programs between general educators and special educators . . . to work with the diverse student population found in fully inclusive schools. . . . Boards should sever the link between funding, placement, and handicapping labels."
>
> (*Winners All: A Call for Inclusive Schools*, 1992, p. 5)

Although the readiness to remove labels and separation and to try for integration and general effectiveness in school situations and conditions of life for marginal students seems at hand, there is reluctance in many quarters to engage the problem. We see this as timidity at best and serious neglect at worst; it is, quite clearly, a case of the same kind of problem-minimizing behavior we decry in the schools. The problem has too often become one of keeping difficult problems off the principal's desk or off the agenda of reluctant leaders, and this must change. It may also be the case that some of the advocacy groups that moved aggressively in recent decades to secure special opportunities for children in the various categories succeeded too well, but to the point of fault. They may now be inclined to retain their hard-won special categorical funds and policies and to resist full inclusion of children and funds in reformed general school programs.

Solutions

Many children, particularly those in the inner cities, live in unsafe, disorderly, and decaying environments. The schools, especially in their services to students at the margins, are also in disorder. They represent extreme cases of disjointedness, proceduralism, and ineffectiveness. Some of the disarray is forced by governmental policies concerning narrowly framed programs. Inner-city communities are unhealthy places, dampened by disinvestment in business and industry, by high unemployment, by lack of adequate health services, by high rates of crime, and by unstable and insecure family situations. The solution to this range and depth of problems is difficult to imagine.

Some observers doubt that there is a future for the inner cities and believe the goal should be to move people out as rapidly as possible. Hopefully, those leaving will have strong abilities so that they can cope with the challenges of an emerging global economy and the general complexity of modern life. Already such movement is apparent. However, this leaves the residual elements of the inner cities in a backwater status, lacking leadership and sinking ever further into decay. At least one prominent public figure has proposed something like a new Homestead Act that would cause massive movement out of inner-city environments, but with strong supports for people seeking to make their way in new environments (Kennan, 1993).

But our immediate task is to strengthen the schools of the inner city. To do that, priority must go to the schools themselves, focusing mainly on effective instruction. However, work is necessary in coordination with social, health, judicial, housing, and transportation agencies, among others, to help create coherent patterns of service and support to children and families. Some such efforts for coordination are emerging in many places. They are not always working well, but in time they may succeed. Here, as elsewhere, governmental rules and regulations are often less than helpful. For example, it is often difficult, even illegal, to share information across agencies because of limits imposed by federal laws.

Even the coalitions of community agencies now forming in many communities are limited in what they can do. So far, they are almost clinical in their orientation, for example, offering family therapy in conjunction with school-based remedial work with children. This leaves untouched broader problems such as unemployment and business disinvestment and shortfalls in housing, health services, and transportation. Somehow, we must find means to approach these broader problems in cohesive ways. They are basic for motivating students to be hopeful about the future and for demonstrating adults' deeply caring attitudes toward children.

Some things we can do. While we work for more coordinated services to children, we can also work for integration among professional organizations and bureaucracies and create expectations that they should work together in coherent fashion. No doubt, there are seasons and reasons for separations in order to expeditiously move new ideas and practices in powerful ways. The separate formation of The Association for the Severely Handicapped (TASH) and its remarkable accomplishments over recent decades is one example. But now we have come to a season for integration, not only of students, but of bureaucratic and professional services. It will be difficult to achieve such broad integration if the schools are partitioned internally in ways reinforced by government agencies, professional associations, and advocacy groups.

Already it appears that local efforts to provide coherent programs for students are frustrated because of the separation of professional and bureaucratic agencies. Federal and state agencies send separate and narrowly oriented monitoring teams to schools to check separately on special education programs, Chapter 1 programs, and the like even though research findings show there is much overlap in the characteristics of students served in several of the programs, and that there is no separate knowledge base undergirding instruction in the several fields. The special panel created by the National Academy of Science reported, for example, that there is "no educational justification for the current categorization system that separates" mildly MR, LD, and Chapter 1 groups in the schools (Heller, Holtzman, & Messick, 1982, p. 102). Yet the Office of Special Education asks school districts to report their operations in terms of categories that have no credibility as educational classifications.

Instructional Improvement

A first priority in seeking improvement in the learning of students, particularly those whose achievements are at the margins, is improvement of instruction. This need is most prevalent in inner-city schools. In data recently assembled for one urban school district, only 6 of 50 elementary schools showed average achievement (50th percentile) in reading comprehension at the national average. Of the students in elementary schools of that city, 20% scored below the 11th percentile of national norms for reading. Such data do not tell the whole story because some of the schools were in highly favorable situations. In the 10 lowest-scoring schools (in reading) of the city, the 20th percentiles on national norms were 1, 1, 2, 2, 3, 3, 4, 5, 5, and 6. Teachers in some schools report that students begin first grade not with a head start but with incredibly little background for learning at a primary level. Students at the margins, many of whom start with only poor readiness for academic learning, come to school for breakfast and stay for lunch, but learn little to nothing in the remainder of the school day. The academic achievement of many inner-city students is appallingly, disastrously low.

To make improvements, it appears that students need more instruction--in intensive, even aggressive, forms--not a different kind of instruction. They need it early and in continuing ways throughout the school years, and they need the most capable teachers.

In a recent study, a meta-review of the research literature was combined with the judgments of researchers and practicing educators to identify the variables or practices that are well confirmed as a valid basis for instruction (Reynolds, Wang, & Walberg, 1992; Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1990). Figure 1 shows the 28 categories of variables in order of their influence on learning from highest to lowest. The figure reveals that direct psychological influences have, by far, the greatest effects. These direct influences include: (a) students' cognitive abilities, motivation, and behavior; (b) classroom management, climate, and student/teacher interactions; (c) amount and quality of instruction; and (d) parental encouragement and support of learning at home. Variables one step removed from learning have a relatively moderate influence. These include: (a) school culture; (b) teacher/administrator decision making; (c) community influences; and (d) the peer group outside school. The variables that are far removed from the learning setting, which include school and district demographics, state-level policies, and school policies, have the least influence, even though many policymakers are currently preoccupied with educational restructuring at remote organizational levels.

The variables within these broad categories provide more specific illustrations of what directly and powerfully influences learning. Table 1 lists 20 of the variables most important for the learning of children (Reynolds, Wang, & Walberg, 1992). The first 11 items are principles of instruction, the next three reflect contextual considerations (all of them involving parental involvement), and the final six represent characteristics of students that relate to learning.

Topping the list is time on task or student time engaged actively in learning. Time is the most ubiquitous factor observed in research on learning. To learn well, students must spend time actively seeking to learn. This means that parents and teachers must somehow cause children to commit time to learning. It helps enormously, of course, if other conditions favorable to learning are also applied consistently. We do not use time carefully now. Haynes and Jenkins (1986), for example, showed that students who go to Chapter 1 or special education resource rooms part time for instruction often end up with no more total time on task in subjects in which they were intended to receive extra attention than if they had stayed full time in their regular classes. Allington and McGill-Franzen (1989) reported a similar finding.

Imagine a situation in which psychologists measure the time that students spend actively in learning, rather than giving IQ tests, and in which they consult with parents and teachers on improved

use of time by children. Imagine, too, that teachers have learned to manage classroom situations in partnerships with teacher specialists who have come out of their separate enclaves. The specialists offer intensive individualized or small-group instruction to pupils most needing direct instruction on basic skills.

Extending that scenario and moving down the list of principles shown in Table 1, we can envision teachers--working in small teams--who provide frequent individual and group feedback to students on their classroom performance, check each student for comprehension on elements of the curriculum, and explicitly promote metacognitive learning strategies.

Surveys show that teachers of advantaged, disadvantaged, and special children agree that the principles listed in Table 1 are important in attempts to enhance learning. There is not a different set of principles for instruction of Chapter 1 students, or migrant children, or special education students. Undoubtedly, adherence to basic principles of education is especially important for students who have not learned well in the past. Yet they have not been followed well in inner-city schools.

We suggest that as we move toward integration of categorical programs, and as teachers and psychologists of all kinds are brought together for teamwork, these are the ways their work should be set out. As we work with parents, these principles of learning can be reinforced for application at home. Schools with a high concentration of students living in high-risk circumstances need help of many kinds, but we think little will be gained in the learning of children unless and until there is rigorous application of the important principles of learning in the schools.

We believe that the diagnosis of learning problems could be much improved through close attention to the same variables stressed here for instructional improvement. Individual pupils, for example, might be studied in terms of how well they use time, how capable they are in self-management or in the use of metacognitive strategies, how orderly they are in classroom situations, how supportive their parents are in school-related affairs, and so on. All of these conditions can be influenced by teachers.

Policy-level Changes in the Search for Improvement

We offer a number of suggestions for policy changes and for revised bureaucratic functioning in the form of scenarios for the future:

- The U.S. Department of Education (USDE) sends out only broadly consolidated monitoring teams to states and local schools and extends their mission to look for and encourage every form of collaboration among programs. Such teams represent all categorical programs, including special education, Chapter 1, migrant education, and bilingual and language-related

programs. In the process of planning consolidated monitoring activities, an improved level of coherence in federally supported programs has been achieved.

- USDE has broad authority to grant waivers of rules and regulations to states and local school districts that wish to try for full integration of federally related programs and other programs for experimental periods. The conditions of waivers must include provisions such that no financial disincentives are created for schools undertaking experimental programs. In return for waivers, schools provide high-quality evidence on educational outcomes. No aspect of federal policy or programs has been excluded from waiver provisions.
- USDE establishes a priority of concern (for attention in all allocations of all discretionary funds) in areas of inner-city education. Attention is given to problems such as school attendance and dropouts, suspensions, and expulsions, as well as to special programs.
- A common sunset date has been set on legislation creating categorical school programs. Broad studies are commissioned on how such programs can be restructured as integral aspects of total school operations. New legislation reflects and encourages integration across formerly categorical programs.
- All federal agencies collecting and disseminating data on the schools are required to include data on literally all students.
- Data collected on special programs in the schools use classifications or categories only in cases that have scientific and professional credibility. For example, a moratorium is declared on the use of the categories of learning disabled and mildly mentally retarded.
- USDE seeks to combine its efforts with those of the Departments of Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Justice, and Transportation in experimental work of broad character in priority zones, defined mainly to include inner-city situations. New enterprise zone legislation defines areas in which multifaceted priority zones will operate.
- Changes are made in funding systems to emphasize, reward, and maintain programs in the schools that are noncategorical, oriented to prevention of educational problems, and evaluated in terms of outcome variables.
- The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), The Association for the Severely Handicapped (TASH), possibly the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), and other such groups, have taken action to bring themselves together and to join the emerging movements for merger by the National Education Association (NEA) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) to create an integrated professional organization in education. From this

unified base, there is strengthened work on integration of education within schools and with other human service professions and agencies outside of schools.

- Efforts are under way to encourage closer coordination of special and regular teacher preparation tracks in colleges and universities.
- Efforts are made to cause a merger among categorical parent and advocacy groups, such that encouragement and support are offered to inclusive and integrated program structures in the schools.

We believe there is no more urgent issue in the nation than what we have touched upon here: improvement in the life and learning of all children in the inner cities. Disorder and neglect must be turned to hope and opportunity. Schools must be totally inclusive and powerful in their ability to serve children at the margins, those who present the greatest challenge to teachers. We emphasize that the policies of inclusion and integration should apply not only to children, but also to bureaucratic and professional structures. Federal education policies in particular have fostered much separation of programs and students. The era of separation must come to an end.

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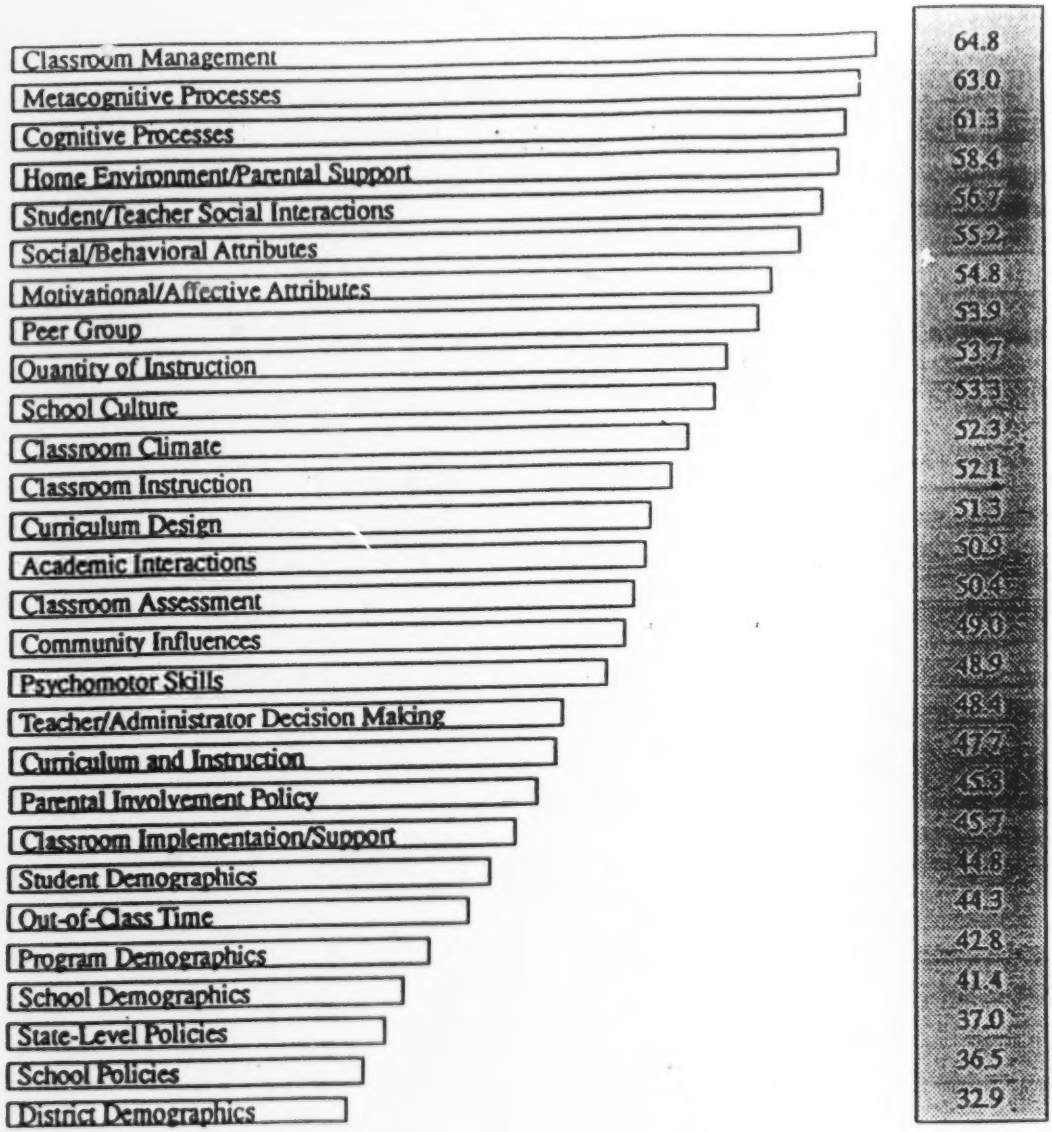

Figure 1. Relative Influences on Learning.

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Table 1

Variables Most Important for the Learning of Children As Rated by a 12-Member Panel of Experts

Category	Variables
Instruction	Time on task (student time engaged actively in learning)
	Time spent in direct instruction on basic skills in reading
	Time spent in direct instruction on basic skills in mathematics
	Frequent feedback provided to students about their performance
	Comprehension monitoring by the teacher (planning; monitoring effectiveness of actions; testing, revising, and evaluating learning strategies)
	Explicit promotion of student self-responsibility and effective metacognitive learning strategies
	Use of clear, organized, and direct instruction
	Setting and maintenance of clear expectations of content mastery
	Appropriate reaction by teacher to correct and incorrect answers
	Appropriate task difficulty (students are challenged)
	Safe, orderly school climate
Out-of-School Contextual	Parental expression of affection to children
	Parental interest in student's schoolwork
	Parental expectation for academic success
Student Characteristics	Use of self-regulation and metacognitive strategies
	Level of reading comprehension ability
	Attitude toward school
	Attitude toward teachers
	Motivation for continued learning
	Level of general academic knowledge

EPILOGUE: A SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

From the Invitational Conference on Making a Difference for Students At Risk

Sponsored by

The National Center on Education in the Inner Cities

in collaboration with

The National Research Center on Cultural Diversity and Second Language Learning

October 14-15, 1993

This summary report was prepared following the conference on Making a Difference for Students At Risk, an invitational conference sponsored by the National Center on Education in the Inner Cities at the Temple University Center for Research in Human Development and Education, in collaboration with the National Research Center on Cultural Diversity and Second Language Learning at the University of California at Santa Cruz. The conference was supported by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) of the U.S. Department of Education. The opinions expressed by the conferees, as discussed in this report, do not necessarily reflect the position of OERI, and no official endorsement should be inferred.

An Overview

This report was prepared following the invitational conference of October 14-15, 1993, on Making a Difference for Students At Risk. The conference was held to address policy and school reform issues surrounding categorization and labeling of students in need of "supplemental" and/or "special" education and related support services, particularly those in "at-risk" circumstances. Conference attendees represented the broad spectrum of persons concerned with education, including teachers, administrators, researchers, policymakers, and representatives from advocacy agencies and professional organizations (see the "Participants List" in Appendix A).

Although the complete conference proceedings will be published at a later date, this brief summary presents a number of the suggestions and recommendations made at the conference. Some were generated by presenters and others by the conference organizers (see the conference agenda in Appendix B). Participants devoted much of the conference time to small work groups, where ideas and policy recommendations were generated. Proposals from all sources are summarized here. None of them was voted on formally by the full set of conferees, and there were disagreements on some matters, so we cannot presume here to represent the views of all conference participants. However, this epilogue reflects the tenor and some specifics of the conference proceedings, considering all voices--speakers, organizers, and conferees.

On one overarching matter we can be certain: the conference touched upon deeply felt and significant issues. Finding ways to harness all the major resources and expertise in our nation's cities to improve education and life circumstances of children, youth, and families is one of the most pressing needs of our time. It is "at the margins"[1] of inner-city schools that we encounter the most calamitous situation in education in this country. Here is where failure and disorder are at an extreme and threaten to overtake whole communities. Here is where disregard for the schools is most obvious. Even in urban universities, many researchers have abandoned inner-city schools at the margins; as a result, data are thin or missing entirely. This is surely one place where basic reform of the schools must be centered.

Of particular concern is education's neglect of students from minority families. Conferees repeatedly expressed the view that in the 30 years since the beginnings of the War on Poverty and in the 40 years since the Brown decision, practically nothing rewarding or enhancing has occurred in the education of minority children. In fact, "we are little, if at all, beyond where we started." Special programs launched over recent decades are fragmented and ineffective, and there is still much segregation by race. The recurring theme running through the conference was that the urgent need for reform of inner-city education, especially for young minority men, cannot be overstated.

It was also clear that problems of schooling vary significantly from city to city. The influx of immigrant children from Mexico and the various Asian nations into Los Angeles contrasts sharply with the virtually all-Black schools of parts of Detroit, New York, and Philadelphia. Flexibility in federal and state rules and regulations will be required to permit local adaptations in school reform efforts.

One major conference theme focused on the need for schools to be totally inclusive and thoroughly integrated. Many were concerned that when students are set aside in resource rooms, special classes, or special schools, there is a strong tendency to lower the educational standards for these

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[1] The term "at the margins" could, about as well, be "at risk," "exceptional," "disadvantaged and resilient students," or "marginalized students." Each term lacks full clarity; each has its critics. We use them all and somewhat interchangeably, trusting to the reader to understand and tolerate our roundabout approach to a construct with many names and nuances.

marginalized groups. But conferees stressed that the goals of inclusion and integration should apply to more than just students. If bureaucratic structures in government, professional associations, and advocacy groups remain fragmented, it will be difficult to achieve the goal of integration for students.

No single idea achieved wider consensus at the conference than one relating to terminology, in particular, the negative labels attached to many students. The current identifiers for categories of children were described as "bankrupt" at best; yet there remains some resistance to changes in classification procedures. It appears that some of the hard-won victories on behalf of various categories of students and the related special funding streams will now be defended by those who feel rewarded by narrowly framed programs, even those with labels.

This conference may have been the first in which representatives of a wide range of categorical programs met together. Conferees expressed the need for continuing dialogue in the broad framework of the conference. In the discussion groups, it was clear that individual conferees "represented" quite separate constituency groups; yet there was recognition that cross-category dialogue produced rich new ideas and that a concerting of voices and of programs was needed.

A particularly challenging idea, expressed quite persuasively early in the conference, was that major changes in inner-city education may happen quite suddenly. Sometimes situations reach a critical stage at which changes occur rapidly, and, it was proposed, we may have reached that point in inner-city education.

Recommendations

Outlined below are some of the ideas emerging from the conference that might characterize desirable changes--whether rapid or gradual. It is important to note that in preparing these summaries an attempt was made to reduce much of the overlap in the discussions by reporting specific concerns and recommendations according to the most pertinent group topics.

1. The public schools of the nation should be inclusive and integrated.

This would mean:

- Reducing all forms of "set-asides" or segregation of students.
- Decreasing suspensions, expulsions, and dropouts.
- Merging Chapter 1, learning disability, and related programs.
- Placing "burden-of-proof" obligations on those who propose separating a student from the mainstream program.
- Integrating federal and state bureaucratic agencies across all categorical programs, including revisions in monitoring and reporting systems to emphasize teaming and coordination.
- Integrating professional groups, such as the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) and The Association for the Severely Handicapped (TASH), and their further integration with the emerging union of the National Education Association (NEA) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT).
- Setting a common "sunset" date for legislation affecting categorical programs, and organizing efforts to develop coherent, broadly framed revisions of policies and programs in all domains.

Narrowly framed and segregated categorical programs, as organized in the past, were unsuccessful. The National Academy of Science special panel (Heller, Holtzman, & Messick, 1982) saw no educational justification for maintaining separate programs for learning disabilities, Chapter 1, and mild mental retardation. It is interesting that recent federal reports in the field of special education show the two largest categories to be learning disability (poorly defined, but now comprising more than half of all "disabled" students) and cross-categorical (U.S. Department of Education, 1992). The abandonment of the categorical approach for mildly disabled children may be occurring very rapidly. Between 1987-88 and 1989-90, a two-year period, the number of teachers employed in cross-categorical programs (23,000) increased 130.5%. That is one of the most remarkable statistics related to school programs of recent years. It seems likely that integration and coherence of programs for students will not fully occur unless and until bureaucratic and professional structures are pulled together. This presents a major challenge to the large bureaucracies and the major professional education associations.

2. **The public schools should be organized into smaller units (mini-schools, charters, or "houses") in which groups of students and teachers remain together for several years of study.**

   This would entail:

   - Training all teachers (both general education teachers and specialists in various fields, such as second-language learning or special education teachers) for altered roles (such as working in mini-schools).
   - Freeing local school teams (teachers, students, and parents) to innovate in significant ways to create revised programs.
   - Making every possible effort to reduce alienation of students from teachers, classmates, and schools.
   - Enabling students and parents to choose the mini-schools they wish to join.
   - Permitting exceptional students to engage in activities beyond the mini-school when necessary to offer appropriate opportunities (e.g., the student athlete on the basketball team, the outstanding violinist who plays in the all-city orchestra, or the excelling mathematics student who attends an accelerated math program at the local university once a week).
   - For the most severely alienated students, providing special opportunities in "street academies" that employ proven principles.

Alienation and estrangement of students and teachers are major problems at the margins of inner-city schools. The formation of mini-schools, within a framework of site-based management, extensive choice (by students, teachers, and parents), and major innovations in curriculum and instruction, appears promising. Within these mini-schools, categorical programs and staff, as we now know them, would be melded into the general programs to work collaboratively. A key feature is the unity of groups of students and teachers over several years. Mini-schools present opportunities for the implementation of principles emerging from research on resilience--especially relating to continuing contacts with children and youth by caring adults and the encouragement of self-efficacy.

3. **The use of labels for students (such as mildly mentally retarded, Chapter 1, learning disabled, and emotionally disturbed) should be discontinued.**

   This would involve:

   - Shifting labels from students to programs.
   - Making strong efforts to study individuals and to plan individualized programs, but without labels.

- Shifting diagnostic activities from pathologies to educationally relevant variables, that is, the educational conditions that best promote learning given the individual students' educational strengths and weaknesses.
- Changing special funding systems, which now frequently encourage a "bounty hunt" mentality, to one that pays off on programmatic units.
- Extraordinarily concentrating funds and resources in selected schools, such as those that enroll large numbers of low-achieving students from poor families or students facing the second-language learning challenge.
- Using "outcome-oriented" variables in choosing students who are offered specialized and intensive forms of education, and in monitoring program effectiveness.

Putting labels on programs may, of course, still cause labels to be assigned informally to students, but there should be improvements over present direct child-labeling procedures. One can imagine that programs might bear labels such as the Basic Skills program, Intensive Reading, Braille Reading, the Social Skills program, Reading Recovery, the English as a Second Language program, and so on. There is a tendency to organize programs around presumed dispositional variables, such as migrant status or mental retardation. It would be helpful if diagnostic procedures emphasized variables that educators can manipulate in their attempts to improve learning. An initial step might be to use outcome measures as a first approach in identifying students who need extra help.

4. **Research concerning "marginal" students should be enhanced as necessary to provide a growing knowledge base and credible evaluation system for inner-city schools, including attention to students and programs "at the margin."**

This would require:

- All state and national data collection and dissemination systems intended to reflect the general status of education to include literally all students.
- The U.S. Department of Education to be given broad authority to grant time-limited waivers of rules and regulations to states and local school districts as one of the necessary conditions for increased innovation in programs and improved student learning outcomes, particularly in school program areas now governed by "categorical" laws, rules, and regulations.
- Research efforts to include careful and sensitive disaggregation of data to reflect differential effects and conditions for various racial, ethnic, and gender subpopulations.
- Research that attends to strengths, resilience, and similar "positive" factors, as well as to limitations and deficiencies in inner-city life and learning.
- Efforts to study the change process, particularly as it relates to changing beliefs and assumptions about the capacity for learning by <u>all</u> children, including children who are marginalized in schools.

A substantial amount of discussion at the conference centered on the importance of having truly complete data ("all the way to the margins") when attempting to represent all students and programs. A case was also made for disaggregating data for subgroups, such as for race and gender, as an aspect of research. Such disaggregation of data does not imply physical separation of students within the schools, but only of data showing, for example, how various racial, ethnic, and gender groups are advancing in their learning under various conditions.

5. Strong efforts should be made to advance programs for students who show outstanding abilities.

This would entail:

- Offering beginning programs in important domains of learning in which all students participate and in which extraordinary efforts are made to give students whose background or experience has been disadvantaged an opportunity to show their potentialities for accelerated learning and high competence.
- Adapting programs for students who emerge from introductory programs with evidence of readiness (shown in learning rate, motivation, commitment to task, etc.) for especially challenging and accelerated instruction.

6. **Clearly a necessity, maximum implementation of the well-confirmed knowledge base for teaching in inner-city schools should be sought.**

   This would require:

   - A strong and continuing staff development program for all teachers and school staff, based on "what works" in instruction, and the knowledge base on learners and learning.
   - Systematic efforts to place teachers of highest demonstrated competence in inner-city schools.
   - Aggressive teaching--with high expectations for learning--for all students, in a curriculum that includes complex topics, such as problem solving and communication, in addition to literacy basics.
   - Strong efforts to extend and improve early education programs and development of all promising approaches to the prevention of learning problems.

7. **Efforts should be made to maximize coordination, within institutions of higher education, of programs in the various "categorical" fields and in general education.**

   This would involve:

   - Combining elements of programs in general teacher education, special education, and special language learning areas.
   - Relating preparation of teachers, school administrators, school psychologists, and others to newly emerging forms of education (such as mini-schools).
   - Educating the public about what is needed and encouraging public dialogue on the needs and purposes of school reforms to ensure equity in educational outcomes for <u>all</u> children.

8. **Efforts should be made to strengthen and meld the work of advocacy groups.**

   This would mean:

   - Supporting revised and integrated forms of schooling and funding for special programs.
   - Working in support of efforts to coordinate the emerging school-community agencies designed to provide broad patterns of service to children who have special needs and to their families.

9. **Federal and state authorities should be challenged to create broad, cross-departmental, and coterminous "empowerment zones" as a basis for comprehensive developments and services.**

   This would involve:

   - Building healthy communities.
   - Fostering healthy, well-supported families.
   - Linking school programs and the community to enhance opportunities for learning.

There is a tendency for various departments of government to undertake separate and uncoordinated programs intended to help solve the problems of inner cities. We observe "enterprise zones," for example, in which moves are mainly related to business and job opportunities. But rarely are there coordinated efforts in education, human services, transportation, corrections, and other fields in support of enterprise zones. The proposal here is to achieve simultaneous declarations of empowerment zones by all departments of government and to organize broadly coherent efforts for improvements in inner-city life and learning.

10. Concepts of inclusion and integration should be applied also to the bureaucratic structures of government, professional organizations, and advocacy groups.

Conclusion

The federal role in education has developed over the past three decades mainly through narrowly framed categorical programs. It appears that most such programs have "not worked" adequately, and the new strategy is to rework and improve general school programs as the main resource for all students, including those "at the margins."

Current difficulty resides in the highly disjointed nature of government agencies, funding systems, professional associations, university training programs, and advocacy groups. Many rules, regulations, and laws cause continued frustrating separations where coordination would be preferable. It will be challenging to work through these problems of infrastructure. There will be resistance on the part of some who are rewarded by present practices. Paradoxically, some of those who fought hard in the past for rights, opportunities, and the creation of various categories for students may find themselves defending structures that now operate as barriers to needed change. It will take much courage to lead the way to new, coherent, genuinely useful programs at the margins of the schools.

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Appendix B

AGENDA

Invitational Conference

on

MAKING A DIFFERENCE FOR STUDENTS AT RISK

Sponsored by

The National Center on Education in the Inner Cities,
Temple University Center for Research in Human Development and Education

in collaboration with

The National Research Center on Cultural Diversity and Second Language Learning,
University of California at Santa Cruz

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 14, 1993

7:30 - 8:30 **Breakfast**

8:30 - 9:00 **Welcome**

Margaret C. Wang, National Center on Education in the Inner Cities (CEIC), Temple University Center for Research in Human Development and Education

Joseph Conaty, Office of Research, Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), U.S. Department of Education

9:00 - 9:30 **Introduction and Conference Overview**

Margaret C. Wang, CEIC, Temple University Center for Research in Human Development and Education

Maynard Reynolds, CEIC, University of Minnesota

9:30 - 10:30 **"Twice Victims: The Struggle to Educate Children in Urban Schools and the Reform of Special Education and Chapter 1"**

Session Chair: **Kenneth Wong,** CEIC, University of Chicago

Overview: **Marleen Pugach,** University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee

Discussants: **Martin Orland,** National Education Goals Panel

Jeffrey Osowski, Office of Special Education Programs, New Jersey Department of Education

10:30 - 10:45 **Break**

10:45 - 12:15 **"The Plight of High-Ability Students in Urban Schools"**

Session Chair: **Belinda Williams,** Research for Better Schools

Overview: **Joseph Renzulli, The National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented, University of Connecticut**

Discussants: **Barbara McCombs,** Mid-Continent Regional Educational Laboratory

Brenda Welburn, National Association of State Boards of Education

12:15 - 1:00 **Lunch**

1:00 - 3:30 **Group Discussion:**

1. **Discussion Group on Practice**
   Chairperson: **Mary-Beth Fafard,** Office of Educational Improvement, Massachusetts State Department of Education

   Reporter: **Aquiles Iglesias, CEIC, Temple University Center for Research in Human Development and Education**

2. **Discussion Group on Research**

   Chairperson: **Barry McLaughlin, The National Research Center on Cultural Diversity and Second Language Learning, University of California at Santa Cruz**

   Reporter: **Diana Oxley,** CEIC, Temple University Center for Research in Human Development and Education

3. **Discussion Group on Policy**

   Chairperson: **Donald Clark,** Bureau of Curriculum and Academic Services, Pennsylvania Department of Education

   Reporter: **Andrea Zetlin, CEIC, California State University at Los Angeles**

Note: Discussion groups remain constant throughout the conference.

3:30 - 3:45 **Break**

3:45 - 5:00 **"Street Academies and In-School Alternatives to Suspension"**

Session Chair: **Dick Glean**, School District of Philadelphia

Overview: **Antoine Garibaldi**, Xavier University of Louisiana

Discussants: **Harriet Arvey**, Houston Independent School District

Edmund Gordon, Yale University

5:00 - 6:00 **Break**

6:00 - 7:00 **Dinner**

7:00 - 8:15 **"Alternatives and Marginal Students"**

Session Chair: **Larry F. Guthrie**, Center for Educational Research and Evaluation

Overview: **Mary Anne Raywid**, Hofstra University

Discussants: **Ann Masten**, Institute of Child Development, University of Minnesota

Pauline Brooks, National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards and Student Testing, University of California at Los Angeles

8:15 - ? Informal discussion/debate/play time

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 15, 1993

7:30 - 8:30 **Breakfast**

8:30 - 9:30 **"Bilingual, Migrant, and Immigrant Education"**

Session Chair: **Susan Sclafani**, Houston Independent School District

Overview: **Eugene Garcia**, Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs, U.S. Department of Education

Discussants: **Richard Ruiz**, Department of Languages, Reading and Culture, University of Arizona

Kris Gutierrez, University of California at Los Angeles

9:30 - 10:15 **"Inner-City Students at the Margins"**

Overview: **Margaret C. Wang**, CEIC, Temple University Center for

Research in Human Development and Education

Maynard Reynolds, CEIC, University of Minnesota

Herbert Walberg, CEIC, University of Illinois at Chicago

10:15 - 10:30	**Break**	
10:30 - 12:30	Discussion Groups	
12:30 - 1:30	**Lunch**	
1:30 - 3:30	Recommendations from Discussion Groups	
3:30 - 5:00	**Prospects and the Next Step**	
	Session Chair:	**Maynard Reynolds**, CEIC, University of Minnesota
	Discussants:	**George Ayers**, Council for Exceptional Children
		Eugene Garcia, Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs, U.S. Department of Education
		Valena White Plisko, Elementary and Secondary Education Division, U.S. Department of Education
5:00	**Adjournment**	

EPILOGUE: A SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

From the Invitational Conference on Making a Difference for Students At Risk

Sponsored by

The National Center on Education in the Inner Cities

in collaboration with

The National Research Center on Cultural Diversity and Second Language Learning

October 14-15, 1993

This summary report was prepared following the conference on Making a Difference for Students At Risk, an invitational conference sponsored by the National Center on Education in the Inner Cities at the Temple University Center for Research in Human Development and Education, in collaboration with the National Research Center on Cultural Diversity and Second Language Learning at the University of California at Santa Cruz. The conference was supported by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) of the U.S. Department of Education. The opinions expressed by the conferees, as discussed in this report, do not necessarily reflect the position of OERI, and no official endorsement should be inferred.

An Overview

This report was prepared following the invitational conference of October 14-15, 1993, on Making a Difference for Students At Risk. The conference was held to address policy and school reform issues surrounding categorization and labeling of students in need of "supplemental" and/or "special" education and related support services, particularly those in "at-risk" circumstances. Conference attendees represented the broad spectrum of persons concerned with education, including teachers, administrators, researchers, policymakers, and representatives from advocacy agencies and professional organizations (see the "Participants List" in Appendix A).

Although the complete conference proceedings will be published at a later date, this brief summary presents a number of the suggestions and recommendations made at the conference. Some were generated by presenters and others by the conference organizers (see the conference agenda in Appendix B). Participants devoted much of the conference time to small work groups, where ideas and policy recommendations were generated. Proposals from all sources are summarized here. None of them was voted on formally by the full set of conferees, and there were disagreements on some matters, so we cannot presume here to represent the views of all conference participants. However, this epilogue reflects the tenor and some specifics of the conference proceedings, considering all voices--speakers, organizers, and conferees.

On one overarching matter we can be certain: the conference touched upon deeply felt and significant issues. Finding ways to harness all the major resources and expertise in our nation's cities to improve education and life circumstances of children, youth, and families is one of the most pressing needs of our time. It is "at the margins"[1] of inner-city schools that we encounter the most calamitous situation in education in this country. Here is where failure and disorder are at an extreme and threaten to overtake whole communities. Here is where disregard for the schools is most obvious. Even in urban universities, many researchers have abandoned inner-city schools at the margins; as a result, data are thin or missing entirely. This is surely one place where basic reform of the schools must be centered.

Of particular concern is education's neglect of students from minority families. Conferees repeatedly expressed the view that in the 30 years since the beginnings of the War on Poverty and in the 40 years since the Brown decision, practically nothing rewarding or enhancing has occurred in the education of minority children. In fact, "we are little, if at all, beyond where we started." Special programs launched over recent decades are fragmented and ineffective, and there is still much segregation by race. The recurring theme running through the conference was that the urgent need for reform of inner-city education, especially for young minority men, cannot be overstated.

It was also clear that problems of schooling vary significantly from city to city. The influx of immigrant children from Mexico and the various Asian nations into Los Angeles contrasts sharply with the virtually all-Black schools of parts of Detroit, New York, and Philadelphia. Flexibility in federal and state rules and regulations will be required to permit local adaptations in school reform efforts.

One major conference theme focused on the need for schools to be totally inclusive and thoroughly integrated. Many were concerned that when students are set aside in resource rooms, special classes, or special schools, there is a strong tendency to lower the educational standards for these

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[1] The term "at the margins" could, about as well, be "at risk," "exceptional," "disadvantaged and resilient students," or "marginalized students." Each term lacks full clarity; each has its critics. We use them all and somewhat interchangeably, trusting to the reader to understand and tolerate our roundabout approach to a construct with many names and nuances.

marginalized groups. But conferees stressed that the goals of inclusion and integration should apply to more than just students. If bureaucratic structures in government, professional associations, and advocacy groups remain fragmented, it will be difficult to achieve the goal of integration for students.

No single idea achieved wider consensus at the conference than one relating to terminology, in particular, the negative labels attached to many students. The current identifiers for categories of children were described as "bankrupt" at best; yet there remains some resistance to changes in classification procedures. It appears that some of the hard-won victories on behalf of various categories of students and the related special funding streams will now be defended by those who feel rewarded by narrowly framed programs, even those with labels.

This conference may have been the first in which representatives of a wide range of categorical programs met together. Conferees expressed the need for continuing dialogue in the broad framework of the conference. In the discussion groups, it was clear that individual conferees "represented" quite separate constituency groups; yet there was recognition that cross-category dialogue produced rich new ideas and that a concerting of voices and of programs was needed.

A particularly challenging idea, expressed quite persuasively early in the conference, was that major changes in inner-city education may happen quite suddenly. Sometimes situations reach a critical stage at which changes occur rapidly, and, it was proposed, we may have reached that point in inner-city education.

Recommendations

Outlined below are some of the ideas emerging from the conference that might characterize desirable changes--whether rapid or gradual. It is important to note that in preparing these summaries an attempt was made to reduce much of the overlap in the discussions by reporting specific concerns and recommendations according to the most pertinent group topics.

1. The public schools of the nation should be inclusive and integrated.

This would mean:

- Reducing all forms of "set-asides" or segregation of students.
- Decreasing suspensions, expulsions, and dropouts.
- Merging Chapter 1, learning disability, and related programs.
- Placing "burden-of-proof" obligations on those who propose separating a student from the mainstream program.
- Integrating federal and state bureaucratic agencies across all categorical programs, including revisions in monitoring and reporting systems to emphasize teaming and coordination.
- Integrating professional groups, such as the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) and The Association for the Severely Handicapped (TASH), and their further integration with the emerging union of the National Education Association (NEA) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT).
- Setting a common "sunset" date for legislation affecting categorical programs, and organizing efforts to develop coherent, broadly framed revisions of policies and programs in all domains.

Narrowly framed and segregated categorical programs, as organized in the past, were unsuccessful. The National Academy of Science special panel (Heller, Holtzman, & Messick, 1982) saw no educational justification for maintaining separate programs for learning disabilities, Chapter 1, and

mild mental retardation. It is interesting that recent federal reports in the field of special education show the two largest categories to be learning disability (poorly defined, but now comprising more than half of all "disabled" students) and cross-categorical (U.S. Department of Education, 1992). The abandonment of the categorical approach for mildly disabled children may be occurring very rapidly. Between 1987-88 and 1989-90, a two-year period, the number of teachers employed in cross-categorical programs (23,000) increased 130.5%. That is one of the most remarkable statistics related to school programs of recent years. It seems likely that integration and coherence of programs for students will not fully occur unless and until bureaucratic and professional structures are pulled together. This presents a major challenge to the large bureaucracies and the major professional education associations.

2. **The public schools should be organized into smaller units (mini-schools, charters, or "houses") in which groups of students and teachers remain together for several years of study.**

   This would entail:

   - Training all teachers (both general education teachers and specialists in various fields, such as second-language learning or special education teachers) for altered roles (such as working in mini-schools).
   - Freeing local school teams (teachers, students, and parents) to innovate in significant ways to create revised programs.
   - Making every possible effort to reduce alienation of students from teachers, classmates, and schools.
   - Enabling students and parents to choose the mini-schools they wish to join.
   - Permitting exceptional students to engage in activities beyond the mini-school when necessary to offer appropriate opportunities (e.g., the student athlete on the basketball team, the outstanding violinist who plays in the all-city orchestra, or the excelling mathematics student who attends an accelerated math program at the local university once a week).
   - For the most severely alienated students, providing special opportunities in "street academies" that employ proven principles.

Alienation and estrangement of students and teachers are major problems at the margins of inner-city schools. The formation of mini-schools, within a framework of site-based management, extensive choice (by students, teachers, and parents), and major innovations in curriculum and instruction, appears promising. Within these mini-schools, categorical programs and staff, as we now know them, would be melded into the general programs to work collaboratively. A key feature is the unity of groups of students and teachers over several years. Mini-schools present opportunities for the implementation of principles emerging from research on resilience--especially relating to continuing contacts with children and youth by caring adults and the encouragement of self-efficacy.

3. **The use of labels for students (such as mildly mentally retarded, Chapter 1, learning disabled, and emotionally disturbed) should be discontinued.**

   This would involve:

   - Shifting labels from students to programs.
   - Making strong efforts to study individuals and to plan individualized programs, but without labels.
   - Shifting diagnostic activities from pathologies to educationally relevant variables, that is, the educational conditions that best promote learning given the individual students' educational strengths and weaknesses.

- Changing special funding systems, which now frequently encourage a "bounty hunt" mentality, to one that pays off on programmatic units.
- Extraordinarily concentrating funds and resources in selected schools, such as those that enroll large numbers of low-achieving students from poor families or students facing the second-language learning challenge.
- Using "outcome-oriented" variables in choosing students who are offered specialized and intensive forms of education, and in monitoring program effectiveness.

Putting labels on programs may, of course, still cause labels to be assigned informally to students, but there should be improvements over present direct child-labeling procedures. One can imagine that programs might bear labels such as the Basic Skills program, Intensive Reading, Braille Reading, the Social Skills program, Reading Recovery, the English as a Second Language program, and so on. There is a tendency to organize programs around presumed dispositional variables, such as migrant status or mental retardation. It would be helpful if diagnostic procedures emphasized variables that educators can manipulate in their attempts to improve learning. An initial step might be to use outcome measures as a first approach in identifying students who need extra help.

4. Research concerning "marginal" students should be enhanced as necessary to provide a growing knowledge base and credible evaluation system for inner-city schools, including attention to students and programs "at the margin."

This would require:

- All state and national data collection and dissemination systems intended to reflect the general status of education to include literally all students.
- The U.S. Department of Education to be given broad authority to grant time-limited waivers of rules and regulations to states and local school districts as one of the necessary conditions for increased innovation in programs and improved student learning outcomes, particularly in school program areas now governed by "categorical" laws, rules, and regulations.
- Research efforts to include careful and sensitive disaggregation of data to reflect differential effects and conditions for various racial, ethnic, and gender subpopulations.
- Research that attends to strengths, resilience, and similar "positive" factors, as well as to limitations and deficiencies in inner-city life and learning.
- Efforts to study the change process, particularly as it relates to changing beliefs and assumptions about the capacity for learning by <u>all</u> children, including children who are marginalized in schools.

A substantial amount of discussion at the conference centered on the importance of having truly complete data ("all the way to the margins") when attempting to represent all students and programs. A case was also made for disaggregating data for subgroups, such as for race and gender, as an aspect of research. Such disaggregation of data does not imply physical separation of students within the schools, but only of data showing, for example, how various racial, ethnic, and gender groups are advancing in their learning under various conditions.

5. Strong efforts should be made to advance programs for students who show outstanding abilities.

This would entail:

- Offering beginning programs in important domains of learning in which all students participate and in which extraordinary efforts are made to give students whose background or experience has

been disadvantaged an opportunity to show their potentialities for accelerated learning and high competence.

- Adapting programs for students who emerge from introductory programs with evidence of readiness (shown in learning rate, motivation, commitment to task, etc.) for especially challenging and accelerated instruction.

6. **Clearly a necessity, maximum implementation of the well-confirmed knowledge base for teaching in inner-city schools should be sought.**

   This would require:

   - A strong and continuing staff development program for all teachers and school staff, based on "what works" in instruction, and the knowledge base on learners and learning.
   - Systematic efforts to place teachers of highest demonstrated competence in inner-city schools.
   - Aggressive teaching--with high expectations for learning--for all students, in a curriculum that includes complex topics, such as problem solving and communication, in addition to literacy basics.
   - Strong efforts to extend and improve early education programs and development of all promising approaches to the prevention of learning problems.

7. **Efforts should be made to maximize coordination, within institutions of higher education, of programs in the various "categorical" fields and in general education.**

   This would involve:

   - Combining elements of programs in general teacher education, special education, and special language learning areas.
   - Relating preparation of teachers, school administrators, school psychologists, and others to newly emerging forms of education (such as mini-schools).
   - Educating the public about what is needed and encouraging public dialogue on the needs and purposes of school reforms to ensure equity in educational outcomes for <u>all</u> children.

8. **Efforts should be made to strengthen and meld the work of advocacy groups.**

   This would mean:

   - Supporting revised and integrated forms of schooling and funding for special programs.
   - Working in support of efforts to coordinate the emerging school-community agencies designed to provide broad patterns of service to children who have special needs and to their families.

9. **Federal and state authorities should be challenged to create broad, cross-departmental, and coterminous "empowerment zones" as a basis for comprehensive developments and services.**

   This would involve:

   - Building healthy communities.
   - Fostering healthy, well-supported families.
   - Linking school programs and the community to enhance opportunities for learning.

There is a tendency for various departments of government to undertake separate and uncoordinated programs intended to help solve the problems of inner cities. We observe "enterprise zones," for example, in which moves are mainly related to business and job opportunities. But rarely are there coordinated efforts in education, human services, transportation, corrections, and other fields in support of enterprise zones. The proposal here is to achieve simultaneous declarations of empowerment zones by all departments of government and to organize broadly coherent efforts for improvements in inner-city life and learning.

10. Concepts of inclusion and integration should be applied also to the bureaucratic structures of government, professional organizations, and advocacy groups.

Conclusion

The federal role in education has developed over the past three decades mainly through narrowly framed categorical programs. It appears that most such programs have "not worked" adequately, and the new strategy is to rework and improve general school programs as the main resource for all students, including those "at the margins."

Current difficulty resides in the highly disjointed nature of government agencies, funding systems, professional associations, university training programs, and advocacy groups. Many rules, regulations, and laws cause continued frustrating separations where coordination would be preferable. It will be challenging to work through these problems of infrastructure. There will be resistance on the part of some who are rewarded by present practices. Paradoxically, some of those who fought hard in the past for rights, opportunities, and the creation of various categories for students may find themselves defending structures that now operate as barriers to needed change. It will take much courage to lead the way to new, coherent, genuinely useful programs at the margins of the schools.

References

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THE NATIONAL CENTER ON EDUCATION IN THE INNER CITIES

The National Center on Education in the Inner Cities (CEIC) was established on November 1, 1990 by the Temple University Center for Research in Human Development and Education (CRHDE) in collaboration with the University of Illinois at Chicago and the University of Houston. CEIC is guided by a mission to conduct a program of research and development that seeks to improve the capacity for education in the inner cities.

A major premise of the work of CEIC is that the challenges facing today's children, youth, and families stem from a variety of political and health pressures; their solutions are by nature complex and require long-term programs of study that apply knowledge and expertise from many disciplines and professions. While not forgetting for a moment the risks, complexity, and history of the urban plight, CEIC aims to build on the resilience and "positives" of inner-city life in a program of research and development that takes bold steps to address the question, "What conditions are required to cause massive improvements in the learning and achievement of children and youth in this nation's inner cities?" This question provides the framework for the intersection of various CEIC projects/studies into a coherent program of research and development.

Grounded in theory, research, and practical know-how, the interdisciplinary teams of CEIC researchers engage in studies of exemplary practices as well as primary research that includes longitudinal studies and field-based experiments. CEIC is organized into four programs: three research and development programs and a program for dissemination and utilization. The first research and development program focuses on the *family* as an agent in the education process; the second concentrates on the *school* and factors that foster student resilience and learning success; the third addresses the *community* and its relevance to improving educational outcomes in inner cities. The focus of the *dissemination and utilization* program is not only to ensure that CEIC's findings are known, but also to create a crucible in which the Center's work is shaped by feedback from the field to maximize its usefulness in promoting the educational success of inner-city children, youth, and families.

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